

South Fork of Sabine River (0507G) Recreational Use Attainability Analysis Summary and Recommendation

A recreational use-attainability analysis (RUAA) was conducted on South Fork of Sabine River (0507G) in the summers of 2010 and 2011 to determine the appropriate recreational use and numeric criteria. South Fork of Sabine River is an unclassified perennial water body within Hunt County, approximately 17 miles in length. It is currently listed on the 2014 Texas 303(d) List of Impaired Water Bodies due to elevated bacteria levels. It was initially listed in 2006.

The RUAA identified evidence indicating the designated use of primary contact recreation (PCR) should be revised to secondary contact recreation 1 (SCR 1). SCR applies to water bodies where water recreation can occur, but the nature of the recreation does not involve a significant risk of ingestion. SCR 1 applies to intermittent and perennial freshwaters where site-specific information demonstrates that primary contact recreation has little to no likelihood of occurring due to physical characteristics of the water body such as shallow depths or lack of pools.

Although field staff did not observe any PCR, two interviews indicate that swimming was observed occasionally at one site. One of those interviews referenced seeing boys swimming because their boat had stopped working. Many interviewees who have lived on or near the creek have never witnessed any PCR. Fishing and hunting were much more common activities, reported as personal and observed use. Although there is public access to the creek, there are obstructions that may deter people from swimming there (e.g. log jams, heavily vegetated banks, water moccasins, alligators, woody debris). South Fork of Sabine River was publically accessible at five of twelve sites. The average thalweg depth is 0.73 m (28.7 in) and four of twelve sites had pools deeper than one meter.

In accordance with §307.4 (j)(3)(C) of the Texas Surface Water Quality Standards, the TCEQ recommends a reclassification from PCR to SCR1 with the corresponding geometric mean of 630 colonies *E. coli*/100mL for all of the 17 mile stretch of South Fork of Sabine River from the confluence with Lake Tawakoni upstream to the confluence with Klutts and Sabine Creek. This reclassification is appropriate due to “natural, ephemeral, intermittent low flow conditions or water levels” in accordance with reasons specified in 40 CFR §131.10(g)(2).

Prior to changing the currently assigned recreational use of South Fork of Sabine River in the Texas Surface Water Quality Standards, the TCEQ would provide additional public notice and opportunity for public comment. In addition, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency would review this proposed change under the provisions of the federal Clean Water Act.